DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 310 088 SP 031 382

AUTHOR Heck, Ronald H.; Blaine, Daniel D.
TITLE The Effects of a Colleague-Pairing Induction Program on the Perceptions of First-Year Teachers and Their Mentors.
PUB DATE 89
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, CA, March 27-31, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; College School Cooperation; *Collegiality; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; *Mentors; *Program Development; Role Models; Teacher Characteristics; Teacher Effectiveness; *Teacher Orientation
IDENTIFIERS *Beginning Teacher Induction

ABSTRACT

This study describes the effects of a pairing induction program of 15 first-year teachers and 15 mentors in a collegial relationship. The site of the study was a school district chosen because of its unusually high teacher turnover, the cultural diversity of the students, and the large number of beginning teachers on school faculties. The program utilized the resources of a consortium, including the host school district, the teacher training institution, the state department of education, the teachers' professional organization, and an outside educational consulting agency familiar with teacher induction. Beginning teachers in the program were placed in three different socioeconomic school settings. Mentors were district teachers who had already had at least two successful experiences with student teachers. The attempt was made to match beginning teachers with mentors by school, grade level, subject areas, and personal characteristics. The most important problems identified by both beginning teachers and mentors were classroom management, finding and using support resources, motivating students, working with special problems and developing positive relationships with parents, teachers, and administrators. Effective mentor behaviors included serving as a role model by setting an example, helping to anticipate and solve problems, and providing knowledge and skill. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED310088

THE EFFECTS OF A COLLEAGUE-PAIRING INDUCTION PROGRAM ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTORS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Heck

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Ronald H. Heck

California State University, Long Beach

Daniel D. Blaine

University of Hawaii at Manoa

Presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, March, 1989

SP031582

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE EFFECTS OF A COLLEAGUE-PAIRING INDUCTION PROGRAM ON THE PERCEPTIONS OF FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS AND THEIR MENTORS

Introduction

It is generally recognized that a knowledge of problems faced by beginning teachers can lead to the design and implementation of effective inservice programs to address those needs. Most previous research, however, has focused on identifying perceived problems of beginning teachers and their relationship to teacher education programs (Veenman, 1984). A growing body of literature exists that examines the type of support training districts can provide for beginning teachers, the relationship between this support training and characteristics of beginning teachers, and the characteristics of school settings in which this training occurs (Huling-Austin, 1988; J. Shulman, 1988).

Given the structure of current teacher training and typical field experience, as well as the cultural backgrounds of many new teachers, there is often a dramatic difference between what teachers experience as education students and student teachers, and what they experience as beginning teachers. Such differences are often attributed to beginning teachers holding their first teaching positions in schools that are culturally different from those they attended or those with which they were familiar through their training programs. Research has shown that

encountering problems is a normal part of the probationary experience, yet beginning teachers are often reluctant to seek the support of others in the field, such as administrators, when they encounter problems (J. Shulman, 1988).

Faced with teacher shortages, the need to retain minority teaching candidates, changing cultural backgrounds of students (Marcoulides & Heck, 1988), and high attrition rates of beginning teachers (Schlecty & Vance, 1983), district administrators are beginning to inquire about what types of induction programs work. Insuring that beginning teachers are successful, therefore, is not only a problem facing teacher training institutions; more attention must be given to how teachers can be supported during the transition from student teacher to beginning teacher, and finally, to experienced teacher.

Because of recent hiring patterns, beginning teachers often find themselves in large, urban district environments that can be more stressful, while student teachers typically learn how to teach in more supportive, nurturing environments (Needels et al., 1988). In response to such environments for first-year teachers, districts may need to re-evaluate the nature of their supervisory roles in working with new teachers. Assistance may be perceived as progressive, from nonjudgmental peer support, to supervision for improvement, to formal evaluation for personnel records. As site administrators are often too busy to provide the needed support and supervision for new teachers, this support may come from assigned mentor teachers.

One type of strategy that districts may use is the collegial

pairing of first-year teachers with experienced teachers serving as mentors (Little, 1981; Sparks, 1983; Copeland & Jamgochian, 1985). This strategy emphasizes personal and professional support, observation, sharing of planning strategies, and informal peer problem solving. The resulting networks developed between the participating teachers can provide paths for communciation and the adoption of change (Copeland & Jamgochian, 1985). Colleague pairing, then, emphasizes the role of the mentor or colleague as supportive, as opposed to evaluative.

The purpose of this research study is to describe the effects of this type of induction program on first-year teachers and mentors in a collegial relationship. The district in the state of Hawaii that participated in this research was selected because of its unusually high teacher turnover, the cultural diversity of its students, and the large number of first-year teachers on school faculties.

The collegial pairing of beginning teachers and mentors was an effort to address these specific problems and to thereby ease the transition of the district's first-year teachers from student teacher to experienced teacher. Such teachers, who generally student teach near the university and in an area much like the schools they attended as children, typically find themselves in a very different cultural setting as they begin their teaching careers. The program developed utilized the resources of a consortium, including the host school district, the teacher training institution, the state department of education, the teachers' professional organization, and an outside educational consulting agency familiar with teacher induction. Thus, a

variety of educational agencies interested in easing the transition to classroom teaching, improving beginning teacher effectiveness, and reducing the rate of attrition among beginning teachers were involved in the project.

Beginning teachers who participated in this program were placed in three different socioeconomic school settings to examine whether this variable would have an effect on their perceptions about first-year teaching needs or about the overall effectiveness of the program. Setting One (four beginning teachers) is geographically isolated from the rest of the district, students generally score the lowest in the district on state-wide tests, community socioeconomic status (SES) is lowest in the district, and there is higher absenteeism among students relative to other areas in the district. Setting Two (seven beginning teachers) is composed of students who score around the state average on standardized tests. The area is higher in community SES relative to Area One. Setting Three (five beginning teachers) has the highest-scoring students in the district, and community SES is also the highest relative to the other two assigned locations.

Method

Subjects. Subjects in the study were 16 first-year teachers and 16 mentor teachers. Data from 15 first-year and 15 mentors were included in the analysis. Mentors were district teachers who had already had at least two successful experiences with student teachers from the university and who were nominated by their principals. The attempt was made to match beginning teachers

with mentors by school, grade level, subject area, and personal characteristics. Of the 16 pairs, only 13 ended up at the same schools, due to a lack of qualified mentors at all sites where beginning teachers had been assigned. The school levels of the colleague pairs were 9 elementary and 7 secondary.

Training of mentors commenced in the summer before the program began and continued through the fall semester. The training consisted of workshops on topics such as the role of the mentor, problems of beginning teachers, classroom management and interpersonal communication skills. Eight mentors also completed an additional training course in clinical supervision offered through the university during the first semester of the program.

Instrument construction. To answer the research questions about the mentor role, mentors' abilities to meet beginning teachers' needs, and participants' perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the program, a questionnaire was designed which took approximately 20 minutes to complete. This instrument consisted of Likert-type scales (e.g., 1 low, 4 high) as indicators of respondents' beliefs about the program. Specifically, the questionnaire was designed to measure beliefs about (i) mentor training, (ii) the communication process between teams, (iii) the most salient problems of beginning teachers, (iv) the effectiveness of the mentor in dealing with beginning teachers' concerns, and (v) the effectiveness of the program in meeting its stated goals.

Results

The results of the study are presented aggregated in three

tables. Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency, was calculated for each group on those items dealing with mentor training, beginning teacher needs, and performance in the mentor role. The coefficients ranged between .86 and .92 for this group of subjects. The results in each table are presented as means, standard deviations, and medians.

Table 1 presents the types of communication and extent of formal communciation that took place between beginning teacher and mentor. Respondents were asked to rate the relative frequency of each type of communication.

Insert Table 1 Here

As seen in Table 1, both new teachers and mentors perceived that formal conferences took place infrequently for most teams. Participants also indicated that little communication took place by telephone. Both mentors and beginning teachers also agreed that little or no direct observation and resulting discussion of performance occurred. It should be mentioned, however, that this particular induction model did not have clinical supervision as a major goal. Thus, formal communication appears to have been minimal.

Table 2 presents a summary of participants' perceptions of the perceived needs and problems of beginning teachers. Participants were asked to indicate the relative importance of each need on a four-point Likert scale. Additionally, they were asked to identify the most significant problems encountered

during the induction program.

Insert Table 2 Here

The information in Table 2 indicates that beginning teachers experienced a variety of needs and problems during the induction program. These concerns were somewhat team specific. No one need was rated as particularly important for the whole group of beginning teachers (e.g., classroom management, $\bar{X}$=2.33). The most common problems problems pertained to managing classroom behavior, motivating students, developing positive relationships with others, finding resources, and working with students who have special problems and needs. In response to the question "To what extent do you feel you were able to provide assistance to meet the beginning teacher's overall needs?" mentors reported (on a five-point scale) they were only somewhat successful ($\bar{X}$=2.80). Beginning teachers, in contrast, were much more optimistic about the same question ($\bar{X}$=3.64). This difference in means was significant (t=2.33, p<.03).

Further analysis of this data using ANOVA procedures was also conducted. When considering menter effectiveness across school socioeconomic context or grade level (elementary or secondary), there were no significant differences in beginning teachers' mean perceptions of how well mentors met their needs.

Respondents were also asked to rate the most difficult

problem areas faced by beginning teachers and those areas in which mentors felt it was most difficult to offer assistance. Both beginning teachers and mentors perceived that classroom management, motivating students, finding resources, and working with students having special needs were the most difficult problem areas. Additionally, mentors felt it was the most difficult to offer assistance in the areas of motivating students, helping beginning teachers develop positive relationships, managing the classroom, working with students with special needs, and coping with the teaching workload.

Table 3 summarizes how beginning teachers and mentor teachers as collective groups perceived the role and behaviors of the mentor. Participants were asked to indicate the relative degree to which mentors exhibited the various behaviors.

Insert Table 3 Here

As seen in Table 3, the perceptions of the role and behaviors of mentors were similar between the two groups. In general, mentors acted primarily as friends and confidants, successfully establishing and maintaining contact, showing the beginning teachers where resources were, and to some extent helping them solve problems, especially in the area of classroom management. Analysis of Table 3 suggests that beginning teachers perceived that mentors were more effective in their role than mentors perceived themselves to be. This is apparent, for

example, in the areas of serving as a role model by setting an example, providing knowledge and skill, and helping the beginning teacher to anticipate and solve problems.

The final area of interest in the study concerned the issue of how effective the program was. Once again, there was a significant difference in the mean responses (on a five-point scale) between beginning and mentor teachers in this area ($\bar{X}_{bt}$=3.53, $\bar{X}_{mt}$=2.60, $\underline{t}$=2.42, $\underline{p}$=.02). Beginning teachers thought the program had a significantly greater impact on their teaching success than mentor teachers did. Additional ANOVA analysis indicated that beginning teachers' responses were not influenced by the school setting to which they were assigned nor by their school level.

Beginning teachers were also more satisfied with their pairing assignments. Seventy-three percent of beginning teachers reported they were satisfied with their assignment, while only 50 percent of the mentors were satisfied. In the latter case, however, 79 percent of the mentor teachers indicated they would like to be a mentor teacher again.

Follow-up interviews were conducted with district personnel in January, 1989 to determine the effects of the program on the retention of the first-teachers in the district. Of the 16 teachers who participated in the program, 15 were still with the district, although about one-half had transferred to other schools within district boundaries. The other teacher could not be located. As a result of the outcomes of the pilot program, for the 1988-89 school year the district has 142 trained mentor teachers serving approximately 250 beginning or "new" (to school

or district) teachers. Principals have been given discretionary powers to set up programs, and 32 of the district's 34 schools have currently established colleague-pairing programs.

Discussion

The results of this research reflect somewhat favorably on the colleague-pairing approach to teacher induction across a variety of school settings. The problems confronting beginning teachers in this study are consistent with previous research that suggests these issues are relatively similar in a variety of school contexts (Tisher, 1984; Veenman, 1984). The most important problems identified by both beginning teachers and their mentors were classroom management, finding and utilizing support resources, motivating students, working with students with special problems, and developing positive relationships with parents, teachers, and administrators.

The previously-mentioned issues tend to be problems associated with being "on the firing line," and suggest that beginning teachers have different concerns and needs from student teachers. For example, Needels et al. (1988) found that student teachers were more interested in improving and expanding basic teaching skills, as well as developing students' creativity and critical thinking. First-year teachers were more pragmatic, focusing on the day-to-day problems which they encountered. Practitioners, including principals and student teacher supervisors, may need to view the development of emerging teachers as a more complicated, and longer, process, requiring

different prescriptions and evaluative means, depending at what point in the process the individual is.

This finding may indicate the need to deliniate more clearly the roles of district personnel in providing professional support (nonthreatening help), supervision (for improvement of performance), and formal evaluation (for summative judgments about a range of issues). Hence, mentor colleagues can play an important supportive role during the transition from student teacher, somewhere between the prescriptive supervision the individual receives from the college supervisor and the performance-based evaluation received from the building principal.

As the demands on the principal provide little time for providing support to new teachers, the results suggest that this support can be provided effectively by mentors. Participants expressed agreement about the nature of the mentor role during this program: primarily to provide friendship and professional support through the establishment and maintenance of both formal and informal means of communication, which suggests the program was successful in meeting its goals. The mentors focused most of their help on concerns related to the classroom. However, relatively little direct observation of teaching was reported. Additionally, mentors did not function to help beginning teachers in the areas of school-wide concerns, such as informing them about norms of expectation, school policies, negotiated contracts and benefits, or introducing the new teachers to others.

Somewhat surprisingly, however, little time to talk and

infrequent contacts were also reported. Lortie (1975) has noted that these previously-mentioned characteristics may be functions of constraints imposed by the typical school organization, which makes contact between experienced teachers and beginners difficult. The findings suggest lack of time and teacher preparation needs are variables that may constrain effective communication and peer support or supervision.

Another interpretation of the type of communication and mentor support reported in this study may be associated with mentor role expectations for first-year teachers. Mentors were enthusiastic about the clinical supervision model, citing it as the most positive aspect of their initial training, yet not using it in their actual work with beginning teachers. Neddels et al. (1988) found, however, that college supervisors trained as mentors used clinical supervision techniques with their student teachers but not with their first-year teachers, citing different role expectations as the reason for this difference in behavior.

Beginning teachers appeared to be very comfortable with the colleague relationship developed during the program, possibly because mentors acted as supporters, as opposed to supervisors or evaluators. Apparently as a result of this, beginning teachers thought the program was significantly more effective than their mentors perceived. Similarly, beginning teachers indicated that their needs were met to a significantly greater extent than mentors believed. Much of what beginning teachers felt was beneficial to them apparently went relatively unnoticed by mentors. These mentor behaviors included serving as a role model for the beginning teacher by setting an example, helping to

anticipate and solve problems, and providing knowledge and skill.

Concluding Remarks

Using mentor colleagues to provide nonjudgmental support in key areas of concern such as class management, student motivation, planning, finding resources, and problem solving may be an important step in ensuring first-year teacher success. As teacher shortages become more apparent, it appears beneficial for districts to develop induction programs to decrease attrition rates and ease the transition to classroom teaching through providing collegial support systems. Wildman et al. (1988) argue that beginning teachers must face two critical tasks: teaching effectively in their given assignments and learning to teach. Both tasks must be given official status in districts; that is, to help new teachers become effective and learn how to teach, instead of merely to survive. Thus, the intent of mentor legislation, to improve beginning teacher effectiveness, can be achieved with district support. This support might include providing time for collegial teams to meet, possibly reducing the teaching load for mentors and beginning teachers, or providing economic incentives to both mentors and beginning teachers.

References

Bush, R. (1980). The beginning years of teaching: attention, focus and collaboration in teacher education. In E. Holye & J. Megarry (Eds.) Professional development of teachers (World Yearbook of Education 1980). London: Kogan Page.

Copeland, W. D. & Jamgochian, R. (1985). Colleague training and

peer review. Journal of Teacher Education, 36, 18-21.

Huling-Austin, L. (1988). A synthesis of research on teacher induction programs and practices. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Little, J. W. (1981). School success and staff development: the role of staff development in urban desegregated schools. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education.

Lortie, D. C. (1975). Schoolteacher: a sociological study. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marcoulides, G. A. & Heck, R. H. (1988). Teacher education reform: issues of equity and accountability. Urban Review, 20 (2), 125-134.

Needels, M., Waters, L., Martin-Newman, D. & Tenenberg, M. (1988). Clarifying the role of the university supervisor in teacher induction programs. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Odell, S. J. (1988). Induction support of new teachers: a functional approach. Journal of Teacher Education, 37 (1), 26-29.

Schlecty, P. & Vance, V. (1983). Recruitment, selection, and retention: the shape of the teaching force. The Elementary School Journal, 4, 468-487.

Shulman, J. (1988). Blue freeways: traveling the alternate route with big-city teacher trainees. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Sparks, G. M. (1983). Synthesis of research on staff development for effective teaching. Educational Leadership, 40, 65-72.

Tisher, R. P. (1984). Teacher induction: an international perspective on provisions and research. In L. G. Katz & J. D. Raths (Eds.) Advice in teacher education,Volume 1. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Co.

Veenman, S. (1984). Perceived problems of beginning teachers. Review of Educational Research, 54 (2), 143-178.

Wildman, T., Magliaro, S., Niles, J., McLaughlin, R., & Drill, L. (1988). Sources of teaching problems and ways beginners solve them: an analysis of the first two years. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

TABLE 1

Beginning teacher and mentor perceptions of the communication process between teams

	(1 low - 4 high)					
	Mentor			New Teacher		
Type of Communication	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Face-to-face conferences	2.60	.83	2	2.43	.94	2
Where conferences occurred						
Other's classroom	2.43	1.02	2	2.33	1.07	2
Another place on campus	2.71	1.14	2.5	2.08	.86	2
Off campus	1.40	.52	1	1.27	.48	1
Telephone conferences	1.71	.73	2	1.50	.76	1
Classroom observation and discussion	1.48	.64	1	1.36	.63	1

TABLE 2

Perceptions of beginning teacher needs and most important problems

Need	Importance Of The Need (1 low, 4 high) Mentor Mean	Mentor SD	New Mean	New SD	Most Important Problems Mentor	New
Classroom management	2.33	.90	2.33	.82	6	5
Find resources	2.20	.94	1.87	.83	5	5
Work with children having special needs and problems	2.13	.74	1.93	.70	6	4
Motivate students	2.07	.70	2.20	.68	4	5
Plan instruction	2.07	.59	2.07	.88	1	4
Cope with workload	2.07	.96	2.07	1.03	0	3
Evaluate students	2.00	.66	1.73	.80	0	0
Develop positive relationships with parents, faculty and students	1.93	.88	2.00	.70	0	0
School policies	1.93	.80	1.67	.72	0	0
Manage time	1.67	.72	1.93	1.03	2	4
Cope with students with a wide variety of abilities	1.67	.62	1.93	.70	0	4
Contracts/benefits	1.53	.64	1.20	.72	0	0
Experience feelings of isolation	1.40	.63	1.67	1.04	0	0

TABLE 2

Perceptions of beginning teacher needs and most important problems

Need	Importance Of The Need (1 low, 4 high) Mentor Mean	Mentor SD	New Mean	New SD	Most Important Problems Mentor	New
Classroom management	2.33	.90	2.33	.82	6	5
Find resources	2.20	.94	1.87	.83	5	5
Work with children having special needs and problems	2.13	.74	1.93	.70	6	4
Motivate students	2.07	.70	2.20	.68	4	5
Plan instruction	2.07	.59	2.07	.88	1	4
Cope with workload	2.07	.96	2.07	1.03	0	3
Evaluate students	2.00	.66	1.73	.80	0	0
Develop positive relationships with parents, faculty and students	1.93	.88	2.00	.70	0	0
School policies	1.93	.80	1.67	.72	0	0
Manage time	1.67	.72	1.93	1.03	2	4
Cope with students with a wide variety of abilities	1.67	.62	1.93	.70	0	4
Contracts/benefits	1.53	.64	1.20	.72	0	0
Experience feelings of isolation	1.40	.63	1.67	1.04	0	0

TABLE 3

Mentor and beginning teacher perceptions of the mentor role

	(1 low, 4 high)					
	Mentor			New Teacher		
Mentor Behavior	Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median
Professional colleague	2.87	.91	3	3.20	.44	4
Friend and confidant	2.87	.74	3	3.00	.93	3
Maintained informal contact	2.80	.86	3	2.78	.89	2.5
Established and maintained close contact	2.67	.90	3	2.78	.89	2.5
Had time	2.47	.83	2	2.80	.94	2
Gave classroom management suggestions	2.27	.88	2	2.40	1.12	2
Showed teacher where resources were	2.13	.99	2	2.36	1.22	2.5
Provided knowledge and skill	2.13	.35	2	2.73	.88	2
Served as a role model	2.06	.80	2	2.73	1.03	2
Helped solve problems	2.06	.70	2	2.60	1.06	2
Introduced to others	1.93	1.10	2	2.00	1.17	1.5
Helped understand school policies	1.80	.94	2	1.60	.63	2
Informed about norms and expectations	1.73	.88	2	2.00	1.11	2
Arranged teaching demonstrations	1.20	.41	1	1.20	.41	1